

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 EURE-00 CU-04 EB-07 TRSE-00

OMB-01 SS-15 NSC-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 INR-07 NSAE-00

PA-02 USIA-15 PRS-01 SP-02 /082 W

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P R 221716Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0108

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 0071

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 11804

E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PGOV, PINT, FR

SUBJECT: GISCARD'S PRESS CONFERENCE: POLITICAL ASPECTS

SUMMARY: PRESIDENT GISCARD D'ESTAING HELD HIS FOURTH PRESS CONFERENCE IN TWO YEARS BEFORE 300 JOURNALISTS AFTERNOON OF APRIL 22. FOR OVER TWO FULL HOURS, HE PROVIDED READY ANSWERS TO A WIDE VARIETY OF QUESTIONS ON POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND OTHER MATTERS. SEVERAL FAMILIAR THEMES RAN THROUGH HIS ANSWERS: A CALL FOR MODERATION AND RELAXATION (DECRISPATION) IN POLITICAL LIFE, A CRITICISM OF THE PS AND PC OPPOSITION PARTIES FOR INCREASING INTERNAL TENSIONS, AND AN ENDORSEMENT OF THE GOF'S PROGRAM OF REFORMS. GISCARD DISCUSSED IN DETAIL UNIVERSITY UNREST AND A NUMBER OF SPECIFIC ECONOMIC SUBJECTS: UNEMPLOYMENT, INFLATION, THE 7TH PLAN, MONETARY POLICY, CAPITAL GAINS TAX AND CORPORATE REFORM. END SUMMARY.

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1. DURING HIS BRIEF INTRODUCTION, GISCARD OUTLINED TWO

GOALS HE HAS SET FOR HIMSELF: TO FURTHER A MORE DEMOCRATIC, REFLECTIVE AND PEACEFUL FRANCE IN WHICH POLITICAL LIFE WILL BE ABLE TO PRESERVE A CERTAIN UNITY AND LACK OF TENSION; AND TO MAINTAIN FRANCE'S ROLE AT THE HEAD OF MEDIUM-SIZED COUNTRIES. TO ACCOMPLISH BOTH OF THESE GOALS, MODERATION WAS NECESSARY. HENCE THE NEED FOR INCREASED SOCIAL JUSTICE (READ REFORM) TO TONE DOWN DEMANDS WHICH VARIOUS GROUPS PLACE ON SOCIETY. IN ANSWER TO CRITICS WHO FEEL THAT REFORMS TO DATE HAVE ONLY BEEN HALF MEASURES, GISCARD ASKED THAT HE BE JUDGED AT THE END OF HIS PROGRAM, THAT IN FACT MANY REFORMS ARE BEING PURSUED BUT THAT IT IS TOO EARLY TO GIVE A FINAL JUDGMENT. IN HIS DISCUSSION OF A CAPITAL GAINS TAX, HE WENT SO FAR AS TO IMPLY THAT THOSE WHO DO NOT VOTE FOR HIS BILL IN THE ASSEMBLY WILL BE EXCLUDED FROM THE MAJORITY.

2. CURRENT POLITICAL CLIMATE: GISCARD REJECTED THE CLAIM THAT HIS PRESS CONFERENCE WAS KICKING OFF THE CAMPAIGN FOR THE 1978 LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS. HE AGAIN CONFIRMED HIS INTENTION TO KEEP TO THE SPRING 1978 DATE FOR THESE ELECTIONS, THAT NOW IS THE TIME FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO DEVOTE ITSELF TO ITS MAIN POLICIES AND OBJECTIVES RATHER THAN PREOCCUPYING THE COUNTRY WITH ANOTHER ELECTORAL CAMPAIGN. HE WOULD NOT RISE TO THE BAIT ON WHAT HE WOULD DO IN 1978 SHOULD THE LEFT WIN. HE REPLIED THAT THIS RESULT IS NOT PROBABLE, THAT MUCH WOULD HAPPEN IN THE NEXT TWO YEARS, AND THAT IN ANY CASE THE ALTERNATIVES OPEN TO HIM ARE SPELLED OUT IN THE CONSTITUTION.

3. THE OPPOSITION

(A) GISCARD LAID THE BLAME FOR THE PRESENT TENSE POLITICAL CLIMATE SQUARELY ON THE SHOULDERS OF THE

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P R 221716Z APR 76

FM AMEMBASSY PARIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 0109

INFO ALL EC CAPITALS 0072

AMCONSUL BORDEAUX

AMCONSUL LYON

AMCONSUL MARSEILLE

AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE

AMCONSUL NICE

AMCONSUL STRASBOURG

UNCLAS SECTION 02 OF 02 PARIS 11804

OPPOSITION. CLAIMING THAT HE HAD DONE HIS PART IN PROMOTING A DIALOGUE WITH THE OPPOSITION, GISCARD POINTED TO A NUMBER OF MEASURES WHICH WERE AIMED AT PRODUCING A MORE TRUSTFUL POLITICAL CLIMATE IN FRANCE, SUCH AS THE ELIMINATION OF WIRE TAPPING AND THE EXPANDED ROLE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL. BUT THERE HAS BEEN NO RECIPROCITY. INSTEAD THE OPPOSITION HAS HARDENED ITS ATTITUDE SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THIS YEAR. REPEATING A FAMILIAR THEME GISCARD DEPLORED THE FACT THAT FRANCE WAS PRACTICALLY THE ONLY COUNTRY IN WESTERN EUROPE WHERE THERE WAS NO DIALOGUE BETWEEN THE GOVERNMENT AND THE OPPOSITION.

(B) GISCARD DISMISSED ANY CHANGE IN THE PC AS PURE CAMPAIGN TACTICS. HE LABELED THE DROPPING OF THE DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT AS MEANINGLESS IN VIEW OF THE FACT THAT THE PC HAS KEPT THE THEORY OF THE "CLASS STRUGGLE". MOREOVER, THE PC'S ONLY IMPORTANT UNCLASSIFIED

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DISPUTE WITH THE SOVIET UNION WAS OVER THE QUESTION OF LIBERTIES, A PARTICULARLY SENSITIVE ISSUE IN FRANCE. ON ALMOST ALL OTHER ISSUES, SUCH AS ANGOLA, THE PCF HAS SIDED SQUARELY WITH THE USSR. GISCARD PROMISED THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE USSR AND FRANCE WOULD NOT BE AFFECTED BY PCF CAMPAIGN TACTICS.

4. THE FRENCH ELECTORATE: IN ANSWER TO A QUESTION CONCERNING GISCARD'S DECLINING POPULARITY IN THE POLLS AND WHETHER HE WAS NOT NOW GOVERNING WITH A MINORITY OF THE ELECTORATE, GISCARD ANSWERED THAT IT WAS PRESUMPTUOUS FOR ANYONE TO SPEAK SO SUMMARILY FOR THE

FRENCH ELECTORATE. HE OBSERVED THAT THERE IS A TREND IN  
EUROPE TO GOVERN WITH MINORITY ADMINISTRATIONS, SUCH AS  
IN THE UK, ITALY AND GERMANY. HE POINTED OUT THAT IN  
THE FACE OF THE ECONOMIC CRISIS OF THE LAST TWO YEARS,  
THE EROSION OF THE GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATION WAS LESS  
IN FRANCE THAN ANY OTHER COUNTRY.  
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